Wichita Eagle

HOPE FOR MANITOBA.

A Winnipeg Man Thinks It Will Yet Be the Granary of the World.

"If the horse could stand it," said a well-known resident of Winnipeg, Manitoba, to a reporter for the Washington Star, "a man could leave Winnipeg and ride one thousand miles west and northwest over a level prairie before he would be obstructed by the mountains. This gives an idea of the great territory lying west of Winnipeg, which, to the eastern man, seems way out of the world. The soil of this prairie produces the finest spring wheat grown anywhere, and the enormous plain I've just mentioned will in a few years be the great granary of the world. Eastern people have a misty idea of our expansive territory. We are just commencing to grow wheat compared to a decade hence, though our crop two years ago was thirty million bushels. We have but little snow, and in the many years I resided in Manitoba I never saw the tops of the bright prairie grass covered. Cattle fairly roll in fat, and we are becoming a great cattle country. While most of our settlers are from across the water, yet the number from the western states is yearly increasing. We have no wild west frontier scenes. There are no settlers killed over disputed claims, as has been an everyday story in the west for years. Our homestead laws require a three years' residence of six months each. Land may be preempted, too. Gold has been discovered in wonderfully rich quartz deposits a few miles east of Winnipeg, and paying mills have just been erected by Minneapolis capitalists. I predict a 'rush' to the Lake of the Woods district next year. Winnipeg has thirty-five thousand inhabitants and is a thriving city. Our winters are cold, but we do not mind them. The atmosphere is dry and the days are clear, murky weather being almost unknown."

LONGEST TUNNEL ON EARTH.

Now Under Construction Through the Simplon Mountain.

The longest tunnel in the world will be that now to be constructed through the Simplon. According to the final plans adopted it will have a length of 12.6 miles, or 3.1 miles more than the St. Gothard tunnel. The northern mouth will be situated about 2,300 yards south of Brieg, at the little village of Im Raffl, and the southern 600 yards beyond Ivelle, just below the present wall gallery. About one-half of the tunnel facing north will have an incline of 1.5 per 1,000 yards, just sufficient to cause the water to run off, while the southern portion will have an incline of 6.5 per 1,000 yards. The process of boring will be the same as that followed with the Arlberg tunnel, says the New York Advertiser. Workshops and depots are to be established on the right bank of the Rhone, close to the northern entrance, at a cost of 4,000,000 francs. The power of working required is estimated at 1,450 horse power, viz.: 520 for boring purposes, 780 for ventilation and 266 for electric lighting, etc.—i. e., at the end of the tunnel alone, for which purpose the River Massa is to be dammed up. At the southern side a similar station is to be established, which is calculated to cost 8,000,000 francs and to furnish 2,760 horse power, derived from damming up the River Cairasca. The total cost of the remaining works is estimated at 80,000,000 francs, of which 30,000,000 francs are contributed by the various states interested in the scheme. In order to facilitate the undertaking a track is to be laid on the road between Dornodossola and Iselle, while in the borings are to be used Brandt's rotary boring machines. It is calculated that the work will occupy eight years and a half.

FIREPROOFING IS POSSIBLE.

But Combustible Material Is Often Heedlessly Used in Buildings.

Scarcely a week goes by, says a writer in the Engineering Magazine, that one or another of the journals devoted to architecture does not contain some article by experienced and able writers bearing upon the fireproofing of buildings, and, without doubt, there could be formulated from these articles a system of principles that would be thoroughly efficient to meet the requirments. In the attempt to discover right principles, the advice and assistance of the now noted fireproofing companies should not be neglected. The demand was no sooner created for a science of fireproofing than it was immediately met by the formation of companies for the very purpose of supplying it. The new industry, with experience as its teacher, has developed year by year until at the present moment there is not a first-class architect or engineer in the country who will deny that an absolutely fireproof building can be built, and at a reasonable cost. Yet fires of the most disastrous character are constantly occuring in buildings advertised by their owners as fireproof. It is not surprising, therefore, that a large element, probably a vast majority, of the entire community doubt the possibility of constructing an absolutely fireproof building. It is an incontrovertible fact that every fire which has taken place in a "fireproof" building has been due to the indiscriminate use of combustible material in its construction; moreover, it may be demonstrated that fireproof material could have been substituted for the material burned at a cost not exceeding twenty per cent.

A Strange Prescription.

In an eastern city, recently, two physicians were walking together on the street, when one of them lifted his hat to a lady whom they met. "A patient?" asked the other. "Oh, in a way," answered the first doctor; "I treated her the other day for a small difficulty." "What was it?" "A wart on the nose." "And what did you prescribe?" "I ordered her to refrain absolutely from playing the piano." The other doctor was astonished. "Ordered her to leave off playing the piano—for a wart on the nose! Well, I can't understand your treatment." "If you knew the circumstances, you would," said the first doctor; "she occupies the flat just under mine."

Baby's Idea.

I'd explained to him over and often
What a good little boy should be;
How temper and tumult to soften,
And naughty ways to flee.

He listened, mute and quiet,
With earnest eyes of blue;
Then: "I don't think I'll try it,
I'd rayver be like you."

—Dorothea Lummis, in Kate Field's Washington.

A LONELY ISLE.

Saghalien, the Prospective Home of Russia's Convict Hordes.

Where Escape Is Impossible—Signs That Presage More Humane Treatment of Political and Other Prisoners—How the Islanders Live.

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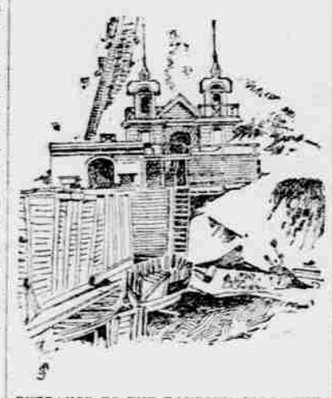
Is it possible that the public opinion of the outside world, especially of America, should be exercising any influence on the government of the czar? The query is called forth by certain unmistakable signs of the last few weeks, such as the tone of leading Russian newspapers with reference to Russia's share in the great American naval display, the publication in an American magazine of a semi-official document signed by a Russian attache d'ambassade, and above all the proposed transfer of convicts from the Russian and Siberian prisons to the island of Saghalien, now under discussion before the imperial council. It is this latter project that concerns us for the present. Is it possible that the repeated exposure in the American press of Russian prison misrule has at last found an



ENTRANCE TO THE DOURSKY COAL MINE.

echo in the government halls, and that the horrors of the Siberian mine and stockade may yield at no distant day to the milder form of punishment known as penal colonization so successfully employed by France.

American readers who have been surfeited with more or less exaggerated descriptions of the Siberian exile system may not be generally aware that for many years already the island of Saghalien on the Pacific coast of Siberia has received a certain number of deported convicts, thus occupying in a measure the same relation to the mother country that New Caledonia does to France. Should the proposed law be enacted her importance will increase tenfold, and the writer therefore feels that a few details on the subject as gleaned from the report of a St. Petersburg journalist, a very recent visitor to the island, may be found interesting. The accompanying illustrations are from photographs taken during the same trip.

The island of Saghalien stretches itself in a parallel line to the coast of eastern Siberia. It was first occupied in 1853, just prior to the Crimean war, by Admiral Nevelsky, acting under instructions from the celebrated governor of eastern Siberia, Gen. Muravieff-Amursky. The first post established there received the latter's name. The northern extremity of the island lies opposite the mouth of the Amur river. Its center is intersected by the fiftieth parallel of northern latitude and its southern end reaches the forty-fifth. The island is narrow and irregular in shape, five hundred and sixty miles long, with an average width of sixty miles, being seventeen miles wide at its narrowest part and one hundred and twenty at its broadest. On the east Saghalien is bounded by the sea of Okhotsk and on the southwest by the sea of Japan. It is separated from the furthermost northern island of the Japanese archipelago, Yesso, by the straits of Laperouse, and from the Asiatic continent by the gulf of Tartary, with a minimum width of five miles.

It was probably this complete isolation of the island that suggested it from the start as an appropriate spot for the founding of a penal colony. When the

A SAGHALIEN CHURCH.

Russians first made their appearance there they found the country populated with a few thousand nomads of the Mongolian race. These people were subdivided into different tribes known as Suchas, Ainis, Ghelaks, Opotchens and Tongus. The Ainis, according to high authority, belong to the oldest inhabitants of Asia. They were for the most part fishermen, but many gave up this vocation, soon after the arrival of their new masters, to turn to agricultural pursuits. They are now proficient in raising garden vegetables, especially potatoes.

The Ghelaks are expert hunters but also fishermen. Their skill in handling their frail craft on the angry seas around the island has often awakened admiration, and on shore they show equal audacity in chasing their prey amid the crags, rocks and fastnesses. Besides the native tribes the Russians found a large population of Japanese, the majority of whom were fishermen that only remained on the island during the fishing season. To this day they leave their camps and outfits in charge of the natives on returning to Japan. There are two permanent Japanese settlements on the southern coast, at one of which a valuable fertilizer is manufactured from sea herrings which are caught in enormous quantities in that region.

The population of the island, in addition to its natural increase, owes its rapid growth since 1858 to the arrival of deported criminals of various grades, who, at the expiration of their terms at hard labor, are permitted to settle and support themselves as best they can. The first batch of convicts arrived in 1859 and were detailed to work the newly-discovered coal mines at Dava. Small parties of these unfortunates followed during the succeeding years. In 1879 a batch of six hundred criminals of the worst description were landed from one of the steamers of the so-called dobrovolny flott (fleet of volunteer cruisers) plying between Odessa and Saghalien. So large an addition to the penal settlement naturally gave rise to the necessity of organizing a regular administration, and in 1884 the home government appointed a governor with a full staff of assistants, consisting of a medical director, an inspector of agriculture, an architect, a surveyor and a states attorney. To the governor were given extensive powers, and in order that an effective supervision might be exercised over the land it was divided into three administrative districts.

Convicts intended for deportation are usually concentrated at Moscow or Kharkov, and from there conveyed to Odessa on the Black sea. There they undergo a thorough medical examination, and only such as are in perfect health and are able to stand the long sea journey are allowed to board the steamer.

Incidentally I may say that it fell to my lot a few months after the close of the Russo-Turkish war to witness the departure from Odessa of a batch of these poor wretches destined to perpetual banishment for various crimes. They were about forty in number, for the most part men in the prime of life and of the peasant class. Dressed in their heavy shoubas, for the frosts had already set in, they were marched handcuffed in pairs from the city prison to wharf. A double file of infantry formed the escort, and the procession moved onward, augmented every moment by the crowd of the curious and idle that any unusual incident, merry or somber, attracts. Among the spectators were many that had come from other motives than morbid curiosity—friends, sweethearts and wives and children of the condemned men, desirous of a last look, or perchance a farewell word if the opportunity offered. These pressed steadily forward nearer to the guard, pushing through the ranks of hooting urchins and chattering loafers, insensible to rough shoves and curses that their persistency evoked, conscious only of

TYPICAL SAGHALIEN SETTLEMENT IN THE SOUTH OF THE ISLAND.

their dogged purpose to win recognition from one pair of eyes whose glance would meet theirs again nevermore.

I turned my attention to the prisoners themselves. Many of them with countenances brutalized by crime walked with stolid indifference to their fate; others cast furtive glances to left and right as if seeking a friendly face. As I scanned more closely these manacled couples I noticed that not all bore the semblance of common thieves or murderers, but some were of a higher type, apparently political prisoners, students, who, lured by the fascinating mysteries of nihilism, had in a rash moment sacrificed themselves on its altar. But now the procession had reached the wharf and a halt was called prior to the boarding of the vessel, the programme being to formally hand the prisoners over to the captain. By this time the excitement of the crowd had reached a high pitch, which was still more increased by the appearance on the scene of two priests who desired to exhort the convicts. Just then several women frenzied past reason broke through the guard and with loud cries of woe embraced their departing friends. The tumult threatened soon to develop into a riot, and the danger was only averted by the prompt action of the ship's captain, who called down a body of marines to aid the infantrymen in driving away the intruders. The prisoners after this were hastily embarked and secured in the hold, where they remained until the vessel's departure. I afterward learned that two of the prisoners, whose aristocratic bearing had especially impressed me, were the sons of a Russian general killed during the recent hostilities and had been sentenced to a term of twenty years for spreading nihilistic doctrines among the troops stationed at Kishineff. One of them jumped overboard during the voyage in the gulf of Aden; the other on reaching Saghalien struck a guard and was shot dead.

For the past few years the number of convicts deported from Saghalien has averaged one thousand per annum. They have been forwarded to their destination in two batches of about five hundred each. Prior to 1884 only men were deported; since then, however, also women and children, many convicts being granted the privilege of taking their families along with them. The wisdom of this measure has been justified by the event, since it has laid the foundation to a legitimate colonization of the island. The same now contains numbers of hard-working immigrant settlers besides the released convicts who have been allowed to settle down as free men. A sentence to deportation to Saghalien involves hard labor either in the coal beds or the public works. It is usually for life, but good behavior on the convict's part always militates in his favor in the long run, and after a term of years he is allowed a certain amount of freedom. Not a few of those released convicts by dint of perseverance and hard work have even acquired a fair competence. They own farms and lands, and while tabooed by official society are not without their social pleasures. One man, a desperate bandit from the heart of Little Russia, died a year ago, leaving many acres of fine pasture land, a hundred head of cattle and five houses to his son and daughter. His son is being educated at Vladivostok at government expense preparatory to being sent to the St. Petersburg school of mines.

Saghalien is now dotted all over with thriving villages. Some contain one hundred houses, others less than twenty. The largest of all, Rikoff, boasts three hundred dwellings, a large church, a flour and sawmill and many workshops. Like most of the villages, Rikoff is situated on a river and is well constructed. Our illustrations convey a good idea of the architecture and general aspect of the place.

As may be imagined, the young colony is a source of some expense to the mother country. The annual cost of transportation of the convicts from Odessa to Saghalien via the Suez canal amounts to two hundred and fifty thousand rubles, and almost twice as much again is expended on the necessary agricultural implements, machinery and supplies. The principal occupation of the settlers is fishing, but the government does all in its power to promote the agricultural interests of the colony, and with this object in view has started two model farms. It also supplies settlers with seed free of cost, and sells them cattle at a very low figure in order to encourage stock-raising. The development of the colony has been particularly rapid since 1886, when a great many innovations were introduced. I might mention the establishment of a meteorological station at Korsakovsk, the construction of highways and post houses and the opening of several schools, so that at the present day these number ten, with an attendance of five hundred children. A telegraph line has recently been projected, and there is some question of spanning the island with a railroad.

GROUP OF AINIS, NATIVES OF SAGHALIEN.

Saghalien is now fairly on the road to be sufficiently developed from an industrial and administrative point of view to receive almost any addition to her convict population. A few words may now be said regarding her physical aspect, climatic conditions and natural resources. The surface of the country is rugged and broken, there being no less than five chains of mountains. The northern half of the island is crossed by the largest chain, which extends further down in two minor ridges along the western and eastern shores. Along the eastern coast on the south we find the Siva Soosoonay ridge, and on the southeastern promontory another one ending in the rocky cliffs of Sarstoko. The separate peaks of these various chains do not exceed three thousand feet; the average height is perhaps but two thousand. The interior of the island is comparatively flat land and is intersected in the center by the rivers Toemy and Poron, which have their sources in the mountains bordering the seashore. Sand banks are only to be found at the northern extremity of the island. Elsewhere the mariner is greeted by frowning cliffs.

The question may now be asked: How is the Russian convict to be benefited by undergoing his sentence in far off Saghalien instead of at home or in Siberia? In other words, will the cause of humanity be served by the proposed change? I think I can safely answer in the affirmative. Even if the signs were wanting that the Russian government has finally harkened to the voice of the critics of its penal system and is entering upon an era of reform, the very fact that the loathsome dungeons and fetid mines of Siberia are to be replaced by open air labor is of itself an immense stride forward.

The hard lot of Russian prisoners hitherto, and more particularly their confined condition, has been due to the necessity of providing against escapes. No such necessity exists in Saghalien, thanks to her isolation. The stormy seas that wash her shores form an effectual barrier to all attempts at flight. The convict there must feel that no personal effort of his could carry him thence, and in accepting his lot he seeks comfort in the thought that good behavior will eventually secure him full liberty within the confines of his island home and afford him a chance to rehabilitate himself. As to the future of the colony, one need only point to Australia and Tasmania as an evidence of the possibility of forming the nucleus of a substantial community from the class of humanity constituting a penal settlement.

V. GRIBAYEDOFF.

Longevity by Occupation.

Mr. Stevenson, an Edinburg actuary, has found from statistics in his calculations on the expectation of life, that the largest mortality is among those engaged in indoor occupations. Thus 40 out of 100 people who reach 70 years are farmers. The average mortality per thousand is 29.2 among liquor dealers, increasing from 12.2 between the ages of 30 and 39 to 102.8 from 70 upward. Among 1,000 gardeners he finds the death rate to be 16.6, carpenters 12.4, shoemakers 13.4, stone masons 16.5, butchers 17.8 and inn-keepers 21.4, licensed grocer who sells liquors 18.9, hotelkeepers 26.8, bar-keepers 23.4. Among clergymen the lowest death rate is in the Church of England, 10.3, and the highest in the Catholic church, 15.7. The New York Medical Record attributes the high death rate in the latter church to celibacy. A curious fact is that military men attain a greater longevity than the members of any other profession. To be a warrior in Europe is as conducive to long life as to be a dualist in a southern state.

Why They Fled.

She—You know my grandfather was a relative of Washington, and we always celebrate his birthday by bringing out our Washington relics.

He—I see. And is this waistcoat one that he really wore during the war of the revolution?

She—Oh, yes.

He—No wonder the British left the country.—Judge.

—Husband—"I have been thinking, dear, that I must be a very poor husband." Wife—"What makes you think so?" Husband—"Well, it is said that the best wives always get the poorest husbands."—N. Y. Press.

—Warden—"We usually give prisoners the same general line of work to do here that they had outside. [Now, what line were you in?" Tatter Torn—"I made a specialty of—er—winding eight-day clocks."—N. Y. Herald.

—Lady (engaging cook)—"Do you understand French cookery?" Irishwoman—"Oh, yis, mum, Oi onderstand all about forrin cookery. Oi can cook French beans an' Spanish onions, an' Jerusalem artichokes."—Pick-Me-Up.

—Cook (on the day after her arrival)—"Please, mum, I'm a bit fiery at times, and when I'm fiery I'm apt to be a bit rough spoken, but you needn't let that put you about—with a little present you can allus bring me round again."—Tit-Bits.